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Book Reviews.

The Church's One Foundation. Christ and Recent Criticism.
By REV. W. R. NICOLL, LL.D. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1901. Pp. 227. \$1.25.

The editor of the *British Weekly* has here brought together some articles which were first published in that journal, directed against the more radical New Testament criticism of the present day. We believe with him that the church's one foundation is Christ, and that the results of a certain type of modern criticism involve serious consequences. A book which exalts Christ and Christianity, as this one does, is well meant, and will do good somewhere.

Nevertheless, these essays by Dr. Nicoll have certain characteristics which greatly hamper their general usefulness. They aim to furnish a modern apologetic for traditional conceptions of the four gospels against the findings of certain recent scholars, of whom he particularly names Schmiedel, Cheyne, Moffatt, Alexander Robinson, and Bruce. It becomes evident in his discussion, however, that he has an entire distrust of all historical investigation of the New Testament, and is unable to distinguish processes from results, or to recognize differences between the several stages of historical criticism. He falsely assumes at the outset that these scholars just named are simply reviving the views set forth sixty years ago by Strauss and Baur; and, although he rightly says that Strauss and Baur were long since completely refuted, he performs the superfluous task of threshing over the old straw of that antiquated controversy. In so doing he fails to meet the situation; his apologetic is ineffective because it misconceives the fundamental ideas of the more radical New Testament criticism of the present time. Dr. Nicoll seems to take small account of the vital changes in thought which have recently come about through the advance in psychology, philosophy, ethics, and natural science; he seems not to recognize that a competent historical method has only arisen within the last two generations, and that a trustworthy historical research into the origin of Christianity is now for the first time being made. This does not mean, of course, that the results obtained by Schmiedel, Cheyne, and others are correct; but the author seems to proceed upon the supposition that historical criticism is unnecessary and unsafe.

Accordingly he says (pp. 88 f.): "It must be remembered that the argument concerning Jesus Christ cannot and must not be left to experts. Everyone is called upon to judge: the materials are accessible to all. What the experts possess in addition to what the people possess is comparatively of small account." By "experts" he means those who are trained and experienced in the historical investigation of the biblical facts and literature. But he had already said (p. 1) with truth that "the controversy about Christ is essentially a controversy about facts. Christianity is not a sentiment, nor a philosophy, not even a theological system, but a historical religion." That is, Christianity is founded upon certain historical facts which took place in the first century A. D. Now, all historical facts are subject to historical investigation. If we wish to form an individual judgment as to whether certain alleged events actually occurred in the first century, we can do so only upon the basis of a thorough investigation of that period according to the true principles of historical research. Who is instructed in the principles of historical research, who is trained for and experienced in such investigation of the past, who is mentally and spiritually qualified for such study? Dr. Nicoll replies: Everyone, equally. The expert in historical investigation is no better able, and has no better right, to form opinions or to be heard about these historical facts than the "man in the street." The plain man of business, whose life has been spent in the store or counting-house, who knows next to nothing about history, literature, philosophy, or science, is as competent to pronounce upon questions of fact concerning the origin of Christianity in the first century A. D. as the scholar who has devoted his life to historical research in this period.

If Dr. Nicoll really thinks so, he will find few to agree with him. And as this notion pervades his discussion, few will be influenced by his book. One fears that the author does not understand the difficulties which now confront thinking people in the matter of the New Testament history. His apology is addressed to a condition of thought which existed in the earlier rather than in the later half of the nineteenth century.

And finally, regret will be felt, even by Dr. Nicoll's close friends, that he has considered it necessary to leave argument and resort to denunciation. He charges that Schmiedel and Cheyne are wilfully and in full knowledge doing their best to destroy Christianity, for he says (p. 30): "It would not be too much to say that there is a deliberate attempt in this book [the *Encyclopædia Biblica*] to obliterate

Christ." If accusation of this sort can be condoned as a feature of religious newspaper controversy, it must be completely condemned when appearing on the pages of a book. No doubt Dr. Nicoll sincerely believes that the triumph of such critical views of the New Testament history as Schmiedel, Cheyne, Moffatt, Robinson, and Bruce advocate would obliterate Christ, and he may be right. But is he equally certain that he is justified in charging the two scholars first named with working deliberately for that obliteration? He does not claim or give evidence that he has actual information as to the real motives of Professors Schmiedel and Cheyne in their work; until they themselves define their motives, Christian trust and forbearance bid us to judge them and to speak of them more charitably.

C. W. V.

The First Book of Moses, Called Genesis. Edited by PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, D.D., LL.D. [The Temple Bible.] Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1901. Pp. 170. \$0.40, *net*.

This is another attempt to arrange the literature of the Bible in a popular literary form. The book of Genesis is dismantled of all chapter and verse markings, and is paragraphed according to the requirements of the sense. But why should the Authorized Version be used for this purpose? We are certainly far enough in advance of the archaic and obsolete expressions and words of that version to require, if not a new translation, at least the Revised Version.

But the characteristics of this volume are its literary features. Professor Sayce has prepared an introduction of eighteen pages, which discusses the origin, development, and literary features of Genesis. He introduces the reader to the early civilizations of the ancient oriental world, which form the background of Genesis. Babylonian culture permeated the peoples of western Asia in the times to which the Tel el-Amarna tablets belong.

Regarding the authorship of Genesis, he says (pp. xii, xvi):

Recent archæological research has thus shown that there is no reason why the Pentateuch should not be substantially a work of the age to which tradition assigns it. Still less reason is there for holding that the narratives it contains are not historically true. . . . More and more it is forcing the conviction upon us that the age in which the Pentateuch first took shape was the age of the nineteenth Egyptian dynasty.

The materials out of which the book was compiled belonged to various nationalities. We find Babylonian elements in the early